

**July 18, 2016 Copy**  
**Parish Council approval given July 18, 2016**  
**Final copy to send on for congregational approval**

**COVENANT AGREEMENT  
FOR  
FAITH AMBASSADORS LUTHERAN PARISH**

**I. NAME**

The name of this cooperative ministry shall be **Faith Ambassadors Lutheran Parish**. Hereafter, 'Parish' will refer to Faith Ambassadors Lutheran Parish. 'Congregation' refers to any of the individual worship sites within the Covenant Agreement.

**II. MISSION STATEMENT**

Faith Ambassadors Lutheran Parish is a Spirit-led ministry within the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that celebrates cooperation, participation, faithful fellowship, creative service and outreach to all people.

**III. PURPOSE**

The Parish will create, promote and oversee shared programming, projects and training by and for participating congregations and the wider community. The Parish supports member congregations in mission and ministry in order that each more intentionally...

1. Celebrates the Gospel within and beyond church walls
2. Connects individuals and families into a living relationship with God and the Body of Christ
3. Brings the Word and Sacraments of God to all people
4. Shares pastoral services
5. Strengthens Christian Education
6. Builds up Parish and Congregational auxiliaries
7. More fully and efficiently utilizes the gifts and strengths of all God's people
8. Encourages and develops lay leadership within the Parish and each congregation

**IV. PARISH MEMBERSHIP**

- A. The charter congregations of the Parish are:
- Redeemer, 601 E. Fulton, Hooper, NE
  - St. Johns Cuming County Line, 123 County Road 16 Blvd, Scribner, NE
  - St. John Ridgeley, 1140 County Road K, Scribner, NE
  - St. Paul, 105 6<sup>th</sup> St., P.O. Box 1, Uehling, NE
  - United, 610 5<sup>th</sup> St., P.O. Box 249, Scribner, NE.
- B. Each maintains its own identity accountable to the Nebraska Synod ELCA for representation at synodical events. The records/finances of the congregations will remain the responsibility of each congregation. Each may continue its own programming for worship, Christian education, auxiliaries, outreach and service. Each is free to work cooperatively wherever it deems best to accomplish or grow its ministries.
- C. Congregations renew participation in the Parish at the congregation's annual meeting.
- D. Congregations may exit the parish provided a two-thirds majority of a duly called congregational meeting is recorded, a six month notification and payment of any outstanding debt is made in courtesy to the other Parish members.
- E. Active congregations are those who have kept the commitments made in this Covenant Agreement and whose representatives faithfully attend Parish Council meetings. Becoming inactive forfeits the privilege of vote on the Parish Council.

## V. PARISH OVERSIGHT

### A. Super Council

1. Consists of representatives elected to the Parish Council; the elected members of each of the currently active congregation councils belonging to the Parish; and the Clergy/Called pastoral staff.
2. The purpose of the Super Council is to improve or strengthen collegiality among the congregational councils and share information.
3. Meets annually under leadership of and at the discretion of the Parish Council.

### B. Parish Council

#### 1. Representation.

- a. Two elected representatives from each congregation. Optimally one of the representatives will also serve on the congregation council. In the event of a vacancy the congregation may appoint a replacement. Representatives serve a three year term with no more than two consecutive terms. Congregations will strive to stagger elections of representatives to better provide continuity of leadership.
- b. The nominating committee for the Chair and Vice-Chair will consist of the Clergy/Called pastoral staff.
- c. Clergy/Called pastoral staff serve as voting members. Clergy/Called pastoral staff will not have a vote on matters pertaining to personal employment. Clergy/Called pastoral staff are allotted reasonable input in matters of a colleague's evaluation or the calling of a new partner in ministry.
- d. Congregations from which the Parish Council Chair is chosen shall have two representatives in addition to the Chair. The Chair has voice but votes only to break a tie.

#### 2. Officers

- a. Chair. It is desired that the Vice-Chair move into the position of Chair after having been mentored by the Chair for two years. The Chair then serves a two year term and is not eligible for re-election as consecutive terms. The nomination goes to Parish Council for vote. The election will be in place to be announced at the annual congregational meetings. This election may include an email ballot. The Chair is responsible for formulating the agenda, calling and leading meetings of the Parish Council, and mentoring the Vice-Chair.
- b. Vice-Chair. The nomination goes to the Parish Council for vote-majority rule. The announcement of election to be made at the next congregational annual meetings. Election may include an email ballot. Serves a four year nonconsecutive term. Two of these years as Vice-Chair and two as Chair. The Vice-Chair has voice but no vote. In the event the Chair cannot complete his/her term the Vice-Chair assumes the position of Chair.
- c. Secretary. Elected at first meeting of new fiscal year. Elected from among representatives on the Parish Council. Two year term. Limited to two consecutive terms. Records minutes and oversees any official communications of the Parish. If the Chair and Vice-Chair seats are vacant the Secretary becomes Temporary Chair and an immediate process for new elections to fill these positions takes place.
- d. Treasurer. Elected at first meeting of the new fiscal year. Election not limited to members on the Parish Council. Two year term. Limited to two consecutive terms. Makes regular reports to the Stewardship Team keeping the Parish Council apprised of all financials through the Stewardship Team.

#### 3. Meetings.

- a. Meets at least quarterly.
- b. Special Meetings may be called by the Chair and at least two representatives and requires a minimum of a week's notice.
- c. Minutes to be made public and shared with congregations in a timely manner
- d. A quorum consists of at least one active representative from each active congregation and a minimum of one member of the pastoral staff.
- e. Meetings shall be open to anyone in the public, but only officially elected or appointed representatives and parish clergy/called staff may vote. Visitors have voice by approval of the Chair.
- f. The Parish Council may go into executive session upon majority vote.
- g. Electronic Meetings/votes are possible at the discretion of the Officers and approval of the clergy.

#### 4. Responsibilities:

- a. Shape the vision for the parish and guide the process toward accomplishing this vision.
- b. Form task force or action groups to accomplish the vision, extending mission and ministry for outreach, stewardship, evangelism and shared servant projects among the towns and rural communities in northern Dodge County. Task Forces may include but are not limited to the following (not in any prioritized order)...
  - i. Cross Generational fellowship
  - ii. Music
  - iii. Youth Ministry
  - iv. Outreach/Evangelism
  - v. Stewardship of Creation
  - vi. Prayer
  - vii. Community Service locally or through the wider Church
  - viii. Family Faith Formation
  - ix. Christian Education
  - x. Leadership
  - xi. Administration
  - xii. Faithful financial management education
  - xiii. Creative Ministry
  - xiv. Worship or similar events not inclusive of Sunday Worship
  - xv. Transformational Ministry
  - xvi. Guiding those in need to legal, certified Community Resources
  - xvii. Other...
- c. Create and oversee a collaborative plan for sharing clergy, staff and program resources among congregations.
- d. Help congregations seeking to restructure yoke relationships toward improving mission, ministry and stewardship within the Parish.
  - i. This will occur under the advisement and guidance of the Nebraska Synod ELCA Legal Counsel, and/or the Bishop or any designated Assistant to the Bishop.
  - ii. It will not, for the sake of sharing or yoking, require that current clergy vacate a call.
  - iii. The design and effort of any Parish configuration optimally leads to more effective ministry and mission among the congregations and community.
- e. Advise and assist the Staff.
- f. Consider the business of the Parish, recommend policy, and take care of all matters pertaining to the Parish.
- g. Annually provide leadership training for Congregational Council candidates or members.
- h. Promote communications between Congregations
  - i. Submit news to each congregation for newsletter publication, including but not limited to
    1. Minutes of Council meetings
    2. Quarterly financial reports
    3. Staff articles
    4. Any Calendar highlights of upcoming activities
    5. Reports of past activities.
  - ii. Communication between regularly called Parish Council meetings whether by email, phone, in person or by other means becomes old business on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.
- i. Oversee and promote gifts toward the Parish ministries through special giving, offerings, Memorials, Funding Projects and etc.
- j. Designate and announce beforehand where Parish Worship Offerings will be given.

- k. Establish and Grow regular and faithful Mission Support to the Nebraska Synod and/or ELCA in keeping with the Parish's joy of being a partner in ministry with the wider Church
  - l. Each third quarter of the year
    - i. Review the teamwork between Council and Staff
    - ii. Prepare a proposed budget for the new year detailing shared expenses each congregation will incur for the next year and submit same to each congregational council
    - iii. Begin the nominations process as needed for officers for the next year
  - m. Serve as the Mutual Ministry Team for the pastors and staff.
  - n. Leads the call process for the Parish in cases of pastoral vacancy.
5. Process for becoming a congregation member:
- a. The prospective congregation's council and/or representative leadership meets with the Parish Council to discuss possible inclusion.
  - b. Upon Parish Council approval, the prospective congregation's leadership shall meet with the Super Council to discuss the new arrangement and share information so everyone moves forward with a decision in a unified way.
  - c. The Parish Council proposes a resolution to recommend the prospective congregation be added to the Parish. Necessary guidance will be given to the prospective congregation that it meet its constitutional requirements for inclusion.
  - d. The new member assumes all the rights and privileges of congregations within the Parish.
  - e. New member congregations will be welcomed into the Parish at any time and will officially be entered into the Parish on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **VI. CALL PROCESS**

- A. The Parish Council designates a Call Committee made up of members from Parish congregations.
- B. The Call Committee (following guidance of the Nebraska Synod ELCA Bishop) interview and make recommendation of a pastoral candidate to the Parish Council.
- C. The Parish Council will then present the candidate to each of the active congregations to approve or disapprove based upon the individual congregation's bylaws/constitution.
- D. Following each congregation vote elected representatives on the Parish Council will bring their congregation's vote to the Parish Council to report the congregation vote. Representatives are bound by the congregational vote.
- E. Approval of the candidate will be on a 2/3rds vote of the Parish Council, weighted according to the current yearly assessment formula.

#### **VII. STAFF**

- A. The staff will consist of those who are appointed or called to serve the Parish.
  - a. Clergy are ordained rostered members of the ELCA serving under call
  - b. Called pastoral staff include those who are serving in a pastoral role in concert with the Clergy (e.g. Parish Ministry Associate; Intern; Evangelist, etc.)
  - c. Any salaried person hired to perform a specific assignment
- B. The staff will work cooperatively to serve the congregations of the Parish.
- C. The staff, together with the Parish Council will work to regularly review the life of the Parish.
- D. The Clergy/Called pastoral staff and the Chair will communicate prior to Parish Council meetings to make recommendations on:
  - a. Meeting agendas
  - b. The vision of the Parish
  - c. Any other item of business involving the Parish, e.g.

- i. A Parish Worship Experience
  - ii. A Parish Service project need
  - iii. Official acts of the clergy/called pastoral staff
- E. The designation "Senior Pastor" is at the discretion of the Parish Council.

#### **VIII. STEWARDSHIP**

- A. There will be a Finance Task Force that oversees acquisition and dispatch of funds. (See XII-g).
- B. The fiscal year for the Parish shall be January 1 through December 31.
- C. Annual expenses will be shared on a percentage formula determined by the Parish Council based on Confirmed Contributing Communing membership of each congregation as certified by the congregation's council secretary in the fall of each year.
- D. A voting member is defined as a confirmed member of a congregation who has communed, and contributed of record within the past two fiscal years.
- E. Parish budgeted expenses shared by congregations and overseen by the Finance Team include:
  - a. Pastors' salaries
  - b. ½ Social Security/Medicare
  - c. Pension and Benefits
  - d. Housing Equity Allowance/Parsonage
  - e. Continuing Education
  - f. Mileage pertaining to Parish work
  - g. Workman's Compensation
  - h. Pulpit Supply
  - i. Parish Evangelist
  - j. Office Supplies
  - k. Secretary/Office Manager
  - l. Other...authorized by the parish council
  - m. The Parish shall fund the Parish Confirmation Program
  - n. The Parish shall partner with the Youth Task Force and youth fund raising efforts to fund the Parish Youth Ministry.
- F. Property (e.g. parsonage) belonging to the individual congregation (or any existing cemetery unless otherwise owned) remains the property of the congregation.
- G. Properties shared for the purposes of Parish business may be supported through the Parish budget.

#### **IX. APPROVAL**

- A. This document will be distributed to all interested members of each congregation for their edification. A discussion meeting pertaining to the Covenant Agreement may be scheduled.
- B. The Faith Ambassadors Lutheran Parish will become formally operational following approval by the charter congregations. The startup date will be January 1, 2017.

#### **X. AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this Covenant Agreement will require two weeks printed notice in congregation publications (e.g. bulletin, newsletter, and/or other) and approved by 2/3rds majority vote of the Parish Council.

#### **XI. CONGREGATION MEETINGS**

Two members of the Parish Council shall attend any called meetings of a Congregation. Ideally they shall represent other congregations in the Parish. The purpose of this attendance is to increase the sharing of information across the parish.

## **XII. MINISTRY TEAM/COMMITTEE/TASK FORCE JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

- A. May be formed by the Parish Council on a temporary or long term basis.
- B. All Ministry Teams/Committees/Task Forces are under the discretion of the Parish Council and are required to report to the Council after every meeting or activity.
- C. The duration of a Ministry Team/Committee/Task Force is dependent on meeting the mission of the Parish.
- D. Membership of each serving group is to represent as many of the congregations as possible.
- E. Staff shall be welcome to attend as needed.
- F. Ministry Teams/Committees include:
  - a. WORSHIP
    - i. To meet quarterly or more as needed.
    - ii. To plan/review/discuss Parish special services and make recommendations as needed to the Parish Council
    - iii. To assist congregation Worship Teams as needed.
    - iv. Not to supplant congregation Worship Teams. All Congregation worship teams may still meet to provide for the worship life of congregations.
    - v. Each congregation will conduct and oversee its own Sunday Worship service on a weekly basis.
    - vi. Scheduling of non-Sabbath cooperative worship experiences, require Council approval.
    - vii. See XII-B
  - b. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
    - i. To meet quarterly or more as needed.
    - ii. Make every effort to provide a shared Vacation Bible School on a yearly basis for all interested children. This does not replace any congregation who may want to also provide a VBS experience.
      - 1. Parish congregations are asked to provide adult leadership for this VBS.
    - iii. The Parish will provide for a Parish confirmation class. Youth of non-member congregations are welcomed. Cost should not prohibit any student to attend.
    - iv. Attendance at the Nebraska Synod Middle School Gathering is expected as an expression of Parish unity and witness. The Parish will work together with congregations to provide financial support for MSG registration.
    - v. High School Youth are strongly encouraged to attend Synod sponsored events and the ELCA National Youth Gathering.
    - vi. See XII-B
  - c. COMMUNICATIONS
    - i. Oversees communication tools of the Parish.
    - ii. Monitors the process for keeping all congregations informed about ministry events and opportunities within the Parish.
    - iii. See XII-B
  - d. YOUTH
    - i. Comprised of individuals passionate about helping youth grow in faith and witness to Jesus.
    - ii. Plans and evaluates organized activities for Middle School and Senior High Youth.
    - iii. A key component of this ministry includes the Peer Ministry Program of the Nebraska Synod.
    - iv. The goal of Youth Ministry is to help youth discover and share in the life and work of the Church.
    - v. See XII-B
  - e. HOSPITALITY

- i. To meet as needed
  - ii. They are the “first impression” seekers, inviting and welcoming people and connecting people into the richness of life in the Parish.
  - iii. Strive to strengthen the connections and fellowship between congregation members and others who are not yet part of faith, to stimulate both spiritual growth and social interaction through various congregational connections and events for the purpose of building relationships and sharing Jesus.
  - iv. They will be able to oversee hosted events, dinners, and/or gatherings. They would find volunteers, plan, prepare, host and cleanup after same.
  - v. Publicize and disseminate all information as widely as possible in whatever means is necessary so congregations and community know about Hospitality events, etc.
  - vi. See XII-B
- f. MISSION
- i. Comprised of people passionate about the future of the Church and who ...
  - ii. ...will identify ways in which God is seeking to grow the Church
  - iii. Seeks to include representation from all congregations in participating in the Transformational Ministry program of the ELCA or any future evangelistic effort assigned by the Parish Council.
  - iv. Helps the Parish Council formulate the Mission Plan for the Parish.
  - v. See XII-B
- g. STEWARDSHIP
- i. Made up of people passionate about all we do for God after we say, “We love God.”
  - ii. Strives to include members from each congregation.
  - iii. Helps individuals/families/congregations grow in being stewards of all that God has given them. This may include a regular stewardship emphasis as a way to challenge people and congregations in being generous givers.
  - iv. Drafts a budget (early fall) to be presented to the congregations for January Annual Meetings. (see section VIII above).
  - v. Works in cooperation with the other task force groups in promoting and securing funding for the programming of the Parish. (including memorials and special gifts)
  - vi. Monitors that the Parish is growing in Mission Share to the wider Church.
  - vii. See XII-B
- h. OTHER...as needed